



ALEXANDER THE GREAT

THE MACEDONIAN WHO
CONQUERED THE WORLD

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First Edition

The Great Mystery of Genius

“Thousands of geniuses live and die undiscovered—either by themselves or by others.”

-Mark Twain

If I could write one sentence that would magically increase your IQ by thirty points, would you be interested in reading that sentence?

Probably. But why? What would be in it for you? Do you think it would help you make more money? Make a name for yourself? Find love, happiness, or fulfillment?

I’ve asked many people these questions and their answers are invariable. “Of course it would.” The *cultural* correlation is undeniable: we’ve been indoctrinated to believe that the higher the IQ, the more likely one is to succeed in life. Hence, we assume that the scientists that win Nobel Prizes, the businesspeople that go from rags to millions, the authors that write runaway bestsellers, register in the highest ranges of IQ simply because they’re enjoying sweet successes.

Well, a tremendous amount of research has been done into the *scientific* correlation between IQ and real-life success, and a very different picture has emerged.

IQ and success are related...to a point. Sure, someone with an IQ of 150 (a “genius” by all normal standards) is going to do much better in life than someone with an IQ of 80 (nearly “mentally disabled”). Similarly, a person with an IQ of 130 (“near genius”) has a significant upper hand in life when compared to a person with an IQ of 100 (“average”).

But here’s the catch: the relation between IQ and success follows the law of diminishing returns. That is, when you compare two people of relatively high IQs, you can no longer predict success by IQ alone. A scientist with an IQ of 130 is just as likely to rise to the top of his discipline as one with an IQ of 180.

Dr. Liam Hudson, a British psychologist that headed up Cambridge’s

Research Unit of Intellectual Development in the sixties, compared IQ to basketball. If you're five foot five, your prospects of becoming even an NBA bench warmer are slim-to-none. The fact is if you're less than six feet tall, you can pretty much forget about your dreams to challenge King James in his court.

Statistical data shows us that you have to be at least seventy-two inches tall to be allowed on the ride, and each inch you push over that is probably better for you. There comes a point, however, when height just doesn't matter much anymore. Just because someone is seven feet tall doesn't mean he's a better player than someone who's six foot six (Michael Jordan's height). The point is you only have to be tall *enough* to have a shot at the pros.

The same pattern is true of intelligence and success in life. You only have to be smart *enough* to fulfill the intellectual requirements for success. History's greatest achievers—practical, savvy people that did big things and changed the world—are heralded as the greatest geniuses to ever have walked the earth, but while many of them had remarkably high IQs, many others were just smart enough.

If we can't explain their success in terms of IQ alone, what else did they possess that allowed them to rise to such heights?

Most people would answer along the lines of “extraordinary inherent talent.” And they would be wrong.

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Call in the inspired bard, Demodocus.

God has given the man the gift of song.

That's one of the many god-given gifts of characters in the *Odyssey*. We've learned much since it was written—we've decoded human DNA and discovered our place in the universe—but we still marvel at the abilities of geniuses in the same way as the ancient Greeks did.

Whether we listen to a sonata of Beethoven's, watch highlight reels of Michael Jordan, or learn a law of Newton's, we view extraordinary human skills as gifts granted by unknown forces for unknown reasons. Such an explanation is convenient, but is it correct?

For the last two centuries, behavioral scientists have studied that question through focused research on great performers of all types: business managers,

chess players, swimmers, surgeons, jet pilots, violinists, salespeople, writers, and many others. Their findings, numbering in the hundreds, have led to conclusions that fly straight in the teeth of what “everybody knows” about ability.

The studies conclusively disproved the notion that great performance stems primarily from a natural “gift” or talent. While some people display innate talents for certain activities early on, amazingly average people have become champions in all manner of endeavors. Many such top performers overcame their average—or even below-average—intellects and nonexistent aptitudes to develop outstanding abilities in disciplines such as chess, music, business, and medicine.

Examples of such remarkable transformations abound throughout history. Henry Ford failed in business several times and was flat broke five times before he founded the Ford Motor Company. In his youth, Thomas Edison’s teachers told him he was “too stupid to learn anything.” Beethoven was so awkward on the violin that his teachers believed him hopeless as a composer.

The world of sports reveals similar findings. Many athletes viewed as superhuman in their abilities were found to have little or no inherent advantage over their peers when they first began their journeys to greatness. Michael Jordan didn’t make his sophomore team because he was deemed too short and average to play at that level. Stan Smith, a world-class tennis player and winner of Wimbledon, the U.S. Open, and eight Davis cups, was once rejected for the lowly position of a ball boy because the event organizers felt he was too clumsy and uncoordinated.

How do we explain such unintuitive findings?

While many theories were put forth, there was one common factor that researchers recognized in all great performers: they practiced so hard and intensely that it hurt.

Ted Williams, a baseball legend considered the most “gifted” hitter of his time, was believed to have natural abilities far beyond ordinary men, including eagle-like vision, extraordinary hand-eye coordination, and uncanny hitting instincts. Williams later said that such stories were all “a lot of bull.” He had a much better explanation for his superior skills.

Williams began his path to greatness at the age of seven, when he decided to dedicate his entire life to one singular task: hitting a baseball as perfectly

as possible. Starting at that young age, Williams spent every free minute he had at San Diego's old North Park field hitting balls, every day, year after year after year. His childhood friends recall finding him on that field smashing balls with the outer shells completely beaten off, with a splintered bat, and with blistered, bleeding hands. He would spend his lunch money to hire other kids to shag his balls so he could hit as many as possible every day. When the city turned off the field's lights, he would go home and swing a rolled-up newspaper in the mirror until he went to bed.

This obsession continued throughout William's entire professional career, and it's no surprise that he excelled because of it. For "The Kid," as he was known, greatness was a long, grueling process—not a gift from the beyond (a claim that he found insulting).

Studies of people with extraordinary abilities, like Ted Williams, have given rise to what Swedish psychologist Dr. K Anders Ericsson called the "10,000 hour" rule. The rule's premise is that, regardless of whether one has an innate aptitude for an activity or not, mastery of it takes around ten thousand hours of focused, intentional practice. Analyzing the lives of geniuses in a wide range of intellectual, artistic, and athletic pursuits confirms this concept. From Mozart to Bobby Fischer to Bill Gates to the Beatles, their diverse journeys from nothing toward excellence in their respective fields shared a common denominator: the accumulation of ten thousand hours of unwavering "exercise" of their crafts.

To put that number in perspective, if you practiced an activity four hours per day, seven days per week, it would take you about *seven* years to reach ten thousand hours. That kind of dedication can only come from the heart—a true love and passion for the activity.

So, what does all this tell us? First, that the seed of greatness exists in every human being. Whether it sprouts or not is our choice. Second, that there are no such things as natural-born under- or overachievers—there are simply people that tap into their true potentials and people that don't. What is generally recognized as "great talent" is, in almost all cases, nothing more than the outward manifestations of an unwavering dedication to a process.

Thus, the advice of "work toward your ten thousand hours" sounds completely reasonable. Right? But there's a problem. There are millions of people that work incredibly hard, yet have little success to show for it. Is ten thousand hours too simple of a prescription for greatness?

Yes. It overlooks another aspect of great achievement that cannot be ignored: *opportunities*—conditions that often appear to be plain old dumb luck.

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As Malcolm Gladwell explains in *Outliers*, in many ways, the opportunities presented to one are just as important to success as one's own inherent talents and willingness to put in thousands of hours of work. For instance, if your dream is to become a professional athlete, it's quite possible that you won't be able to work hard enough to overcome a most devious obstacle: your birthday. How could that possibly be a hurdle?

Easy. Most sports enforce age cut-offs—that is, the ages that determine whether you can play another year in your current age bracket as a “senior,” or whether you have to move up and be a “freshman” in the next.

In Canadian junior hockey leagues, the age cutoff was formally January 1 (it's now December 31). The closer your birthday was to January 2, the better. Why? Well, let's say you were playing in the Bantam category, which is for children aged 13 – 14. If your birthday was in December, you were going to get two years of play at this level. You were going to turn fifteen and have to move immediately into the next category, Midget (which is for kids aged 15 – 16). If your birthday was January 2, however, you'd get an entire additional year to play in Bantam (and every other age group) because when the ages were checked on January 1, you were still fourteen years old.

An extra year of play against players younger than you is a *huge* advantage. Your body becomes bigger, stronger, and faster every day, giving you an opportunity to truly stand out from your birthday-handicapped peers. This extra developmental time predisposes you for selection onto more elite teams, which in turn leads to more ice time and better coaching, which advances your abilities even further.

Sociologists call this phenomenon an “accumulative advantage.” For the elite Canadian junior hockey leagues, the result of this advantage was that for many years, the distribution of birth dates for the top performing kids was heavily weighted toward “first-quarter” babies—kids born between January and March.

Whether we're talking birthdays in sports, or the fact that Bill Gates just happened to go to a high school that housed one of the most advanced

computers of the time—a computer that most colleges didn’t even have—we can easily see that being in the right place (physical, educational, societal, or otherwise) at the right time can influence our destinies as much as anything else.

Now, that doesn’t mean our fates are written in the stars. We can wholly control our dedication to thousands of hours of study, training and work. And grasping opportunities is equally controllable. Sure, we may not be built for the NFL or Kentucky Derby, but we’re surrounded by opportunities every day, everywhere we go. There is no shortage of problems to be solved, needs and desires to be fulfilled, and innovative ways to help others.

But there’s a catch. Most opportunities never announce themselves with trumpets and confetti. They’re easily missed, mistaken, or squandered. They can be scary. And they never come with a 110% money-back guarantee. They’re often nothing more than chances to improve on something other people are already doing.

Opportunities are whispers, not foghorns.

If we can’t hear their soft rhythms—if we are too busy rushing about, waiting for thunderclaps of revelation, inspiration, and certainty—or if we can spot them but can’t nurture them into real advantages, then we might as well be blind to them.

This realization points us to the real heart and mystery of greatness. Just knowing that great achievers work very hard and take advantage of opportunities isn’t enough. Why do some people recognize, appreciate, and pursue opportunities with passion and determination, whereas others don’t? Why are some people willing to push through hell and high water to win, whereas others quit early and easily? Are there practical answers to these questions, or are they unsolvable enigmas of human psychology?

Well, I believe there are very practical answers to what makes a genius tick. I believe there are principles that we can isolate and use to better our own lives. I believe that genius is a *path* that we can all take and derive much benefit, happiness, fulfillment, and success from...not a genetic windfall or divine gift. Ultimately, this is the *path* to greatness.

Not sure if you buy into that? Well, I wouldn’t either if I didn’t know about Dr. Alfred Barrios.

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Psychologist Dr. Alfred Barrios conducted research on the nature of genius in the seventies. He set out to answer the same basic question I posed just a page ago: why do some people rise to greatness whereas others don't?

To look for an answer, he decided to analyze the lives of many of history's greatest geniuses. Were there patterns of circumstances, events, behaviors, attitudes, or ideas that could account for their success? Did the chronicles of their lives collectively hold the secrets to their greatness? He was going to find out.

He first noted and categorized a long list of factors outside of the geniuses' control. Things like lineage, birthright, geography, genetics, education, familial ties, upbringing, and unexpected windfalls. The more data he accumulated and analyzed along this line, however, the more it looked like a dead end. The backgrounds of our species' greatest thinkers and achievers appeared infinitely varied. If there were patterns among the data, he couldn't see them.

Barrios was undeterred and continued to study. Eventually, a different kind of common denominator emerged, one that he found *within* each of the people he studied. Barrios discovered that his subjects had each developed and routinely displayed a combination of very specific characteristics throughout their lives, and not just mildly but conspicuously.

This character-driven idea fascinated Barrios. It suggested that genius is much more than high intelligence, innate talent, extraordinary work ethic, or uncanny luck, but rather a composite manifestation; a synthesis of very specific types of worldviews and behaviors. The more he looked at data through this lens, the more things started to make sense.

Barrios then wondered if anyone could operate at a genius level—and achieve genius-level greatness—simply by learning and adopting the same educated views and disciplined behaviors that so repeatedly characterized history's greatest achievers.

By the end of his research, Barrios had pieced together his “genius code”—a profound insight into what really spawns greatness. He also concluded that we could all indeed use his genius code as a roadmap to walk in the footsteps of history's brightest and boldest, thereby learning to operate at a genius level.

An attractive concept, no doubt, but is it true?

In this book, we will delve into a single characteristic of Barrios' code: *drive*. We will look at how it defined one of history's greatest military geniuses, Alexander the Great, and how we can further develop it in ourselves.

My proclamation is that while Barrios' research may not be the end-all on the subject, it certainly illuminates the path to greatness via a unique, accessible, and practical decoding of genius.

This immediately involves us in a bigger picture question, too—one that's deeply penetrating and personal: why do we desire to heighten our genius and pursue the path of greatness?

We all face a fundamental choice in our lives. Do we take the path prescribed by our “now you're supposed to” society, or do we take our own path toward the life we feel we ought to be living? Do we choose our life's work based on the U.S. Department of Labor's list of highest-paying jobs, or do we follow our bliss? Do we heed the call to conformity, or the call to adventure?

Every day we see how people have answered these questions, whether consciously or otherwise. We're constantly confronted with the lazy, the apathetic, the immoral, the indifferent, the irresponsible, and the disconnected—the signs of a decaying culture.

“What does it all mean?” many wonder while chasing purposes they're told are worthwhile, but which feel empty. “What is the purpose of this life?” humans have wondered for millennia, contemplating how insignificant we are in the great cosmic symphony.

Well, as the preeminent mythologist Joseph Campbell said, deep down inside, we don't seek the meaning of life, but the experience of being alive. And that's what the nature of genius is ultimately about.

It's about how we can empower ourselves to bring true meaning to our lives and the lives of others in ways most people would consider impossible. It's about rising above a life of, as Thoreau said, “quiet desperation” that ends with our songs still in our hearts, and experience the rapture of truly living. It's about saying yes to our adventures.

We rely on geniuses to entertain us, educate us, lead us, and show us all what our species is capable of. We rely on geniuses to give us smart phones, electric cars, cures for diseases, social networking sites, sublime art, world-

class food, and, indeed, the very fabric of our culture.

If you've ever dreamed of playing a hand in the development of humankind, or if you just have a burning desire to improve one small aspect of it, then you have an adventure waiting.

Will you take it?

This book is your invitation.

Drive and the Macedonian Who Conquered the World

“Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

-Howard Thurman

Any great adventure involves trials and tribulations that transform the hero into something greater than she was when she began it.

It’s been seven years since J.K. Rowling graduated from university. She sees herself as the biggest failure she knows: she is recently divorced after only a year of marriage, jobless, and living off social security with a young daughter to support. She’s diagnosed with depression and even considers killing herself. She has something, though—an unfinished manuscript of a story that occurred to her while riding a train several years ago. She walks her baby each day to lull her asleep and then settles into various cafes around Edinburgh, Scotland to hammer away on a manual typewriter, writing and re-writing chapters. She finishes *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* in 1995, which 12 publishing houses reject before Bloomsbury picks it up. She’s paid an advance of £1,500 and told by her editor to get a day job because she has little chance of making money with children’s books. The height of her ambition is for the book to just get reviewed, but within five months of its publication, she wins her first book award. Her story is already being compared to the vaunted work of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Rowling is in shock. This is it, she realizes. This is her chance to shed the grief of her past and create a beautiful new future. Five years later, she releases the fourth book in the series, which sells over 370,000 copies on the first day. Today, the books are the #1 best-selling series of all time with over 400 million copies sold worldwide. For the first time in her life, Rowling doesn’t have to worry if she’ll have enough money to make it through the week, and she summarizes her journey of transcendence thus: “We do not need magic to transform our world. We carry all the power we need inside

ourselves already. We have the power to imagine better.”

Jesus travels through the Judean desert without food for 40 days and nights. The Devil plans on leading him astray in his mission, and appears in disguise with an offer of stones that Jesus can change to bread and eat. Jesus refuses to use his powers for selfish purposes. But the Devil has another trick ready. He leads Jesus to a great temple atop a summit overlooking Jerusalem and challenges him to test God by jumping off the peak to be caught by angels. Jesus sees no reason to prove himself, and declines. In desperation, the Devil takes Jesus to the pinnacle of a soaring mountain and shows him the world. “All this I will give you if you will bow down and worship me,” he says. Jesus has had enough and finally dismisses Satan as a false god. Only then is he joined by angels and allowed to continue toward the final establishment of his divinity.

Some people like to think that geniuses are so inherently extraordinary that they navigate their journeys with clairvoyant ease. This simply isn’t true. Greatness does not come lightly. It requires that you make sacrifices of time, interests, and—sometimes—possessions. The further you move toward greatness, the more greatness demands from you.

In whatever form your adventure takes, there will be obstacles to overcome. Your dedication to your cause will be tested. Your wits will be forced to their limits. People will try to exploit your weaknesses and negate your strengths. The journey toward greatness is not for the meek.

But all barriers yield to one mythical quality: *drive*. The will to persist and overcome. To never give up. To never accept defeat.

Writer and philosopher L. Ron Hubbard said that “there’s no excuse for any failure that ever occurred any place in history, except this: There was just not quite enough carry-through and push-through.” The annals of history offer many examples of this sentiment in action. However, there is perhaps no finer example of one person’s capacity to persevere and prevail than the greatest military commander of all time, a man who accomplished in four years what his ancestors failed to accomplish in the centuries prior, and what nobody has matched since.

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When Alexander III of Macedon was ten years old, his father, King Philip II, saw him tame a fierce horse and thus prophesied that the kingdom of

Macedon was too small for his ambitions. The king wouldn't live to see it, but his prediction would prove to be an understatement.

Alexander was only 16 when Philip led a military invasion into the neighboring lands of Thrace, relinquishing to him the power to rule all of Macedonia, the most powerful kingdom in ancient Greece. Macedonian dominance was new and precarious, however, and dissent mounted in the recently conquered lands.

With Philip and a large portion of the Macedonian army absent, a Thracian tribe saw an opportunity to start a revolt against their rulers. Their underestimation of the young Alexander, however, proved great and fatal when he quickly marshaled an army, marched them into battle against the rebels, crushed the resistance, and renamed their city to Alexandropolis.

Impressed with his son's achievement, Philip employed his teenage son's military prowess further by dispatching him to deal with other Thracian and Greek revolts. One by one, Alexander broke the mutinies and subdued the dissidents. He even saved his father's life in a battle against the Greek city of Perinthus, and repelled an invasion by the nearby kingdom of Illyria. Upon this momentum, Philip, Alexander, and their armies continued to march through Greece to cement Macedonian rule, taking city after city. Those that surrendered were spared bloodshed. Those that resisted fell to the Macedonian sword.

The last bastion of Greek resistance was the powerful city of Thebes, which had allied with Athens against Macedonia. The powerhouses collided in the village of Chaeronea, with Philip commanding the right wing of the army and Alexander the left. A protracted, ferocious battle ensued. Alexander faced the fearsome brotherhood of 300 elite warriors known as the Sacred Band of Thebes. Through ingenious infantry and cavalry maneuvering, Alexander secured an advantageous position and launched a charge that broke the Theban line. The Sacred Band held their ground until all 300 had fallen.

Alexander's military feats were so tremendous that rumors began to spread that he, now only 18, was in fact a descendant of Achilles or possibly the son of Zeus. The rumors were steeped in prophecy; Alexander would rise to incredible power. Two years later, he would take the next step in fulfilling the myth that was quickly forming around him.

In 336 BC, while attending the wedding of his daughter, Philip was

assassinated by the captain of his bodyguards, Pausanias. The regicide's motive is unknown as he was chased down and killed on the spot, but whispers pointed to Alexander's mother, Olympias, and possibly Alexander himself as the instigators. Olympias desired revenge for Philip's divorce and glory for her son by taking the throne and surpassing his father's accomplishments. Alexander wasn't wanting of a motive either; he was bitter after being exiled for two years over a filial feud regarding Philip's desire to produce a full-blooded Macedonian heir with his new wife.

Involved or not in his father's assassination, Alexander was proclaimed king by the nobles and army at age 20. News of Philip's death caused an outbreak of revolts in Thebes, Athens, Thessaly, and the Thracian tribes to the north of Macedon. Alexander would have to act quickly and decisively as the new king, or his sovereignty would collapse before his crown could even settle.

He began by eliminating any potential rivals to his throne, including his cousin and two other Macedonian princes. And he executed his late father's trusted general Attalus, who was secretly being courted by Athens to wage war against the young king. Olympias also moved to protect Alexander's regency by having her two daughters by Philip burned alive—a barbarism that infuriated Alexander.

Once the home front threats were neutralized, Alexander turned his attention to the intrigues of his Greek neighbors. Advisers urged Alexander to deal with the rebellious cities diplomatically, but he had no interest in delicate, protracted negotiations. He mustered the entire Macedonian cavalry—a formidable force of over 3,000 experienced warriors—and rode south toward Thessaly. He ambushed a large Thessalian army while en route, and added to his forces.

Before Alexander reached Corinth, the Greek and Thracian insurgents reconsidered their position. Fearing the wrath of the fierce young king, they backed down and declared Alexander the leader of the "Hellenic Alliance"—a league formed by his father. Alexander pardoned the rebels, and announced that he would continue his father's plans for the conquest of Persia.

His stated motives were uncharacteristic of his position, however; they were greater than mere vengeance and imperialism. Alexander's purpose was to "combine barbarian things with things Hellenic, to traverse and civilize every continent, to search out the uttermost parts of land and sea, to push the

bounds of Macedonia to the farthest Ocean, and to disseminate and shower the blessings of the Hellenic justice and peace over every nation.” Such altruism seems ironic when you consider his hawkish plans. Was it empty rhetoric used to raise an army with which he could smash, usurp, and dominate, or would Alexander act in accordance with his professed intentions to unite and uplift the known world? What *really* drove him? We shall see.

Before Alexander could begin his Persian campaigns, however, Thracian tribes again revolted against his rule. He immediately gathered his army and advanced east into Thrace to quell the insurrections. The Thracians planned to ambush Alexander in a narrow mountain pass near the Thracian and Macedonian border, but he out-maneuvered the garrison and defeated it, gaining entry to the lands. Alexander then caught a tribe of barbarians lurking in his rear, and led an attack. The Thracians lost over 3,000 men in the battle, and Alexander lost less than 50.

The Macedonians continued on to the shores of the Danube, and faced off with 15,000 warriors of the Thracian Gatae tribe. Alexander knew that his enemies expected him to use boats to ferry his men over in waves, so instead, he organized a mass crossing of the river in the middle of the night using dugouts and other improvised rafts and floating devices. 1,500 cavalry and 4,000 troops swam nearly 1,000 feet through the powerful Danubian currents, and upon a surprise attack at sunrise, the Gatae soldiers disbanded and fled. Nearby tribes heard of Alexander’s bold deeds and sent ambassadors to ask for the young king’s friendship, which was gladly granted. The Thracian revolts were hushed.

Alexander’s drive would be challenged next by an Illyrian revolt that threatened to cut off his passage back into Macedon. If Alexander’s return to Greece was delayed for too long, his kingdom was vulnerable to another Athenian and Theban uprising, who were reported to be amassing forces.

The Illyrians held the pass of Pelium, and its nearby fortress, which was the only way back into Macedonia. The Macedonians bore down on the city but were repelled. Precious time was lost and, to make matters worse, King Glaukias of the Taulanti tribe marched in a massive army to reinforce the Illyrians. They spread out amongst the hills and forests surrounding the gap, ready to cut off any advance through the pass or retreat back into Illyria. Alexander was in dire straits: supplies and rations were scant; his enemies outnumbered him many times and held superior, fortified positions; and the

Greek insurgency swelled in his absence. He couldn't retreat or wait for reinforcements—he had to take Pelium, and fast.

What Alexander did next was a brilliant display of his resourcefulness and cunning—two characteristics that flourish through extraordinary drive. Just as nothing produces paralyzing apathy like doubt and resignation, nothing produces cleverness like staring down a crisis with a lionhearted snarl.

Alexander marched a sizable portion of his army into plain sight in the fields in front of Pelium, surrounded by the enemy, and began a rehearsed military drill that his men had perfected. The Macedonian phalanx paraded in perfect synchrony, as if going through a rigorous inspection by their generals. The Illyrians looked on in bewilderment, wondering what their enemy was doing and how they should respond. Their amazement at the procession led to careless formations on Alexander's left flank. This was the opportunity he was looking for. He suddenly called for his infantry to aggressively charge the weakened ground, and the barbarians quickly realized their mistake and fled the hills. Simultaneously, Alexander led a cavalry charge to the hills on his right flank, which was also surrendered by Glaukias' men.

The dispersion of the enemy forces allowed Alexander to secure the entirety of the surround hills, winning him a place of safety. Before he could return to Macedonia, however, he needed to take the city to guard against any future Illyrian attempts at invasion through the pass.

Three days later, Alexander's scouts reported that Cleitus and Glaukias had become careless in their position in front of Pelium, and were vulnerable to attack. That night, Alexander led a body of infantry and archers to the flank of the barbarians' camp, and launched an assault. The Illyrians were caught by surprise, with many still in their beds. The resulting slaughter led to a quick rout. Pelium was again under Macedonian control, and the defeated Illyrian kings accepted Alexander's terms and swore fealty to the fearsome commander.

Alexander's ingenuity at Pelium offers another insight into the special nature of his drive, something that is often summarized as impatience but is actually quite more than that. Some historians criticize the young king's ruse as reckless and its success as lucky. But, as you'll see in the baffling successes of his later campaigns, Alexander was either the luckiest man in history, or there was some other force at work. I believe the latter, but what might that force be? His actions at Pelium offer an answer.

Alexander's position was desperate. His officers suggested retreat. Reinforcements could be sent, they said, but Alexander would hear nothing of it. Not only were their rations insufficient for it, it's very likely that his kingdom would fall to Athens and Thebes while they waited. No, he had to have Pelium, and quicker than any of his men believed was possible. But Alexander felt otherwise. While his men saw an impenetrable citadel, he saw frail bowling pins ready to be smashed by the right roll of his mighty forces. Behind Alexander's "impatience" was an incredible impetus and sense of forward motion that made nothing of anything or anyone that dared get in his way. He rarely paused because, frankly, nothing was intimidating enough to really give him pause. In analyzing the drive of men and women of Alexander's caliber, you find in every case a downright heroic concentration of confidence and flippancy that inspires others to believe that they, too, can do the impossible.

Within a few days of taking the pass, Alexander learned that the Persians were spreading money amongst the anti-Macedonian Greeks to encourage revolution, and that a rumor had spread that the Illyrians killed him. These influences spurred the Thebans to throw out Macedonian garrisons, declare independence from Alexander's rule, and recruit several other city-states to do the same.

Enraged, Alexander marched an army of over 30,000 men 300 miles south to Thebes at a breakneck pace, arriving in only two weeks. The sudden emergence of Alexander and his formidable army stunned the Theban allies, causing them to withdraw their support for the rebellion, leaving Thebes to stand alone against Alexander. Alexander camped north of the city and waited, giving the Thebans the chance to send an embassy and ask for pardon. The Theban generals responded by sending out a force of infantry and cavalry to attack Alexander's outposts, which was repelled.

Nevertheless, Alexander remained patient with the Thebans. He demanded the ringleaders of the resistance, and promised no harm to any others that surrendered. Theban leaders refused the demand despite the fact that the bulk of the citizens favored giving in.

Theban soldiers built fortifications outside of the city to prepare for the upcoming battle, and Alexander made plans for an invasion. He still refused to act, however, wishing to save the glorious city and prevent loss of his ranks. The delay was brought to an end not by Alexander, but by his general

Perdiccas, who seized an opportunity to siege the city and break through the city wall. The breach was successful, and Alexander ordered thousands of his soldiers to reinforce the attack.

Thebes' warriors fought bravely, but their defenses fell and the city was overrun. Boetians, Phoeians, and Plataeans—fighting within Alexander's ranks—slaughtered thousands of Thebans, including women and children, out of revenge for years of Theban oppression. 30,000 survivors were captured and sold into slavery, and the city was razed to the ground.

The force and cruelty with which Alexander smashed the Theban rebellion sent shock waves throughout all of Greece. Athens wouldn't dare risk his wrath and immediately withdrew troops they had sent to fight with their now-vanquished allies. Sparta was amazed to see the powerful city, which had conquered them at Lenetra, shattered to pieces as if by the gods themselves. Athens and its allies again asked the king's forgiveness, which Alexander again granted. What happened at Thebes served as a warning, while at the same time a call for peace. Alexander had no desire to inflict any more suffering on his people.

In one year, Alexander secured himself against the barbarians of the north and subdued all of Greece. But that was only an overture to what was to be his life's work and ambition: Persia, the land of Xerxes, of Darius, of Cyrus—a land of untold resources and wealth, and full of brave men. The conquering and integration of Persia represented the truest test of his ambition for greatness, an adventure that would rival the exploits of his idol, Achilles, as well as transform the course of human history forever.

Invading Persia promised to be the most formidable of undertakings, challenging Alexander's genius and drive in every way. And yet, despite Persia's impressive wealth and might, the great kingdom had a key weakness: it was a disjointed mass 30 times the size of Macedonia's territories, comprised of many independent regions ruled by local governors. Many of these "satraps" were dissatisfied with the sovereign and with each other. Alexander knew this and counted on their discord to mean lax, uncoordinated defenses.

But Alexander wasn't one to take things for granted. His obsessive attention to detail and uncompromising work ethic drove him to spend the coming winter months relentlessly working to assemble his army, equip his ships, and devise a plan for the largest attack ever attempted by a man. In this

we glimpse another chromosome of the DNA of drive. Alexander's adamantine will and belief in himself stemmed from the fact that he was willing to out-plan, out-work, and outlast anyone. He didn't chase dubious shortcuts, and in some cases, purposely avoided them just to experience the glory of overcoming a great challenge. He didn't beg for the favor of the gods; he strove to overawe them.

Alexander's thorough preparations accounted for what would be a long absence from his home kingdom. He appointed his trusted general Antipater as regent and left him with a sizable army to maintain the peace. He even gave away all of his personal possessions to be sold to help cover the tremendous costs of his ambitions, leaving himself, as he laughingly said, only with his hopes. Many of the rich men that served in his elite Companion cavalry unit were inspired to do the same. Regardless, Alexander had to borrow a sizable sum to fully ready his military.

In 335 BC, at 22 years of age, Alexander crossed the Hellespont strait into Asia Minor with over 35,000 Macedonian, Greek, and Thracian troops, a fleet of 120 ships with crews numbering nearly 40,000, and only a month's worth of supplies. Once his ship reached the coast of Asia Minor, Alexander threw a spear into the ground, stepped ashore, and declared that he would accept the whole of Asia as a gift from the gods.

Darius, the Persian king, ignored the crossing, unafraid of an army that his military outnumbered by many times. Consequently, the Macedonians moved through Asia Minor with little resistance, liberating several Greek towns from Persian rule. Darius still refused to take Alexander seriously despite these affronts against his empire and the warnings of his experienced generals that the young Macedonian was not to be underestimated.

Memnon, a competent general favored by Darius, knew that Alexander's provisions and funds were scant, and recommended a "scorched earth" strategy wherein the satrapies that lay before Alexander would be burned to the ground, denying him forage and resources. Persian officers wouldn't hear of it, however, and resolved to meet the Macedonian king in pitched battle. An army of 20,000 cavalry and an equal number of Greek mercenaries was assembled to drive back Alexander and his invaders.

Alerted by his scouts that the Persian forces were in his vicinity, Alexander forged ahead to the Granicus River. As the Macedonians approached the shore, the sun was setting and the Persian army could be seen

in the plains on the horizon. Parmenio, Alexander's chief general, advised that the army camp for the night and persuade the enemy to do the same.

Alexander had other plans, though. He preferred the morale-boosting effect of a bold offensive, and didn't want the Persians to think that he would pause even for an instant at such a pitiful barrier, which may bolster their confidence to repel his advance.

Instead, he ordered his scouts to survey the Persian lines and report their findings. As he had suspected, the disposition of the Persian troops was faulty, and he was determined to force a fight at once. Alexander's commanders moved the Macedonian armies into position, and there was a moment of profound silence as they faced their neighbors across the river. Then, a Macedonian bugle sounded, followed by a deafening war cry, and spear-wielding infantry began to cross. The Persians rained javelins down upon them, and dispatched cavalry to drive them back.

A furious fight ensued. Alexander slew several notable Persians, including Darius' son- and brother-in-law. The latter almost took Alexander's life, slicing part of his helmet off before falling to his spear. This heroic charge enabled the entire right wing of the Macedonian army to cross the river and press the attack. The full might of Alexander's cavalry fell upon the Persians and broke their lines, but the Persians still had their Greek mercenaries, which had been merely spectators to the slaughter thus far. They would prove no match for the Macedonians. Over 18,000 were cut to pieces, and the remaining 2,000 were captured.

When the fighting finally stopped, the Persians had lost over 1,000 horsemen, many nobles, and 18,000 Greek mercenaries. Alexander lost less than 200 men.

Although the road to the heart of Persia was now open, it couldn't be taken until Alexander had the coastal cities under his control to protect his rear and flanks from the formidable Persian navy. All of the important coastal cities were Greek, and many welcomed Alexander with open arms. In each case, he threw out the Persian tyrants, established a democratic form of government, began some type of public improvement in commemoration of their freedom from the Persian yoke, and granted the inhabitants ancient privileges that had been denied to them for the last two hundred years of foreign rule.

Several cities that had been granted exceptional privileges by Darius

resisted Alexander, but one by one, they fell to his superior tactics. As he conquered each, he continued his strategy of befriending the Greeks, pardoning surviving citizens, and granting the cities autonomy and freedom. There was no plundering to help pay for the campaign, as was customary in wartimes, only the collection of reasonable taxes to fund his war chest.

With the coast of Asia Minor now under his control, Alexander had effectively nullified Persia's most powerful military asset: its world-renowned navy. He was now prepared to move into the interior of the Persian Empire. But winter was approaching, and Alexander's men needed to rest and heal. So he granted a leave of absence to a considerable number of his newly married soldiers to be with their wives until spring, when they would move to bring down the entire Persian empire.

Alexander himself, however, would not rest. His unremitting drive wouldn't allow it. So he gathered a body of troops and set out to close any remaining ports on the mainland and further starve out the Persian navy. Over the next several months, he and his men marched through bitter weather and conquered all of western Asia minor—nearly 40 towns were subdued, with most surrendering without contest, knowing that they would be treated liberally by the conqueror. Those that rebuked his offer of a peaceful surrender, no matter how well fortified, fell.

When spring of the next year came, the wounded warriors had healed and the soldiers on leave returned, many bringing new recruits. It was time for Alexander to drive his spear through the heart of Persia, fulfilling his ambition to conquer and civilize the known world.

Darius believed that the defeats of his generals in Asia Minor were mere accidents and misfortunes. The territory lost was a sliver on the fringe of his vast empire, and while he didn't comprehend the significance of Alexander's progress, he did comprehend that Memnon's early advice should've been followed. He put the Greek rogue in supreme command of the Persian military with the orders to crush the Macedonian invader.

Memnon, an incredibly intelligent and able general, and probably the only man in the service of Darius who could pose a threat to Alexander, set plans in motion to bring the war to Macedonia and instigate a revolt amongst Alexander's enemies in Greece. To do this, he would muster a large fleet of warships and soldiers to take islands near Macedonian shores and use them as bases from which to launch an invasion. But, as fate would have it, Memnon

died of fever after only the first successful siege of the island of Chios, and his successor was by no means up to the task he inherited. Alexander's good fortune shone once again.

Alexander reunited with the main body of his army at the city of Gordium, which contained the famous Gordian Knot. Legends held that the intricate knot was tied by King Midas, and the man who unraveled it would go on to become king of all of Asia. How Alexander solved the knot is disputed. According to certain historians, he thoughtfully disassembled the looped mass. According others, he promptly drew his sword, slashed the rope, and unraveled it. Either way, he made his intentions clear, which offers us another chance to understand the effectiveness of his uncanny drive.

Whether sieging an "impregnable" city, facing an "invincible" army, or solving an "impossible" knot, Alexander refused to believe he couldn't succeed. He was driven to win by any means necessary, and he rarely played by the "rules." One of his hallmarks was, through diligent analysis and planning, devising radically new strategies and tactics that his enemies had no preconceived defenses for. Sometimes circumstances called for a carefully orchestrated gambit, as you saw in Pelium. As you'll see in one of his greatest military victories, however, the most unexpected move is sometimes a direct assault so audacious that nobody would dare attempt it. Nobody but Alexander, that is.

The Macedonian forces moved on toward their goal, taking minor cities as they went and leaving garrisons to consolidate their position. They met little resistance as they moved deeper into the Persian lands, but finally, in 333 BC, Alexander met the full power of the Persian king at the city of Issus. Darius commanded the forces in person upon the advice of his courtiers and generals.

Macedonian scouts estimated the Persian army at no less than 200,000 men and possibly as many as 500,000. Alexander had just over 40,000 soldiers. He called his Companions and other commanding officers to ascertain their views about the proximity and enormity of the enemy's forces. They were eager to follow him into battle, and plans were outlined of where and how to stage the confrontation.

Darius and his hordes were expected to wait in nearby plains where his numbers could engulf and swallow the smaller Macedonian army. Instead, however, Darius impatiently marched his massive army to Alexander's rear,

choosing a much narrower theater of engagement, as the flatlands in front of Issus were bound by the ocean on one side and the mountains on the other.

When the Macedonians learned that they wouldn't face the Persians in three days as anticipated but rather the next day, disconcert spread amongst their ranks. Alexander was himself startled at the maneuver, but he emboldened his men by delivering an impassioned speech:

"Our enemies are Medes and Persians, men who for centuries have lived soft and luxurious lives," he bellowed. "We of Macedon for generations past have been trained in the hard school of danger and war. Above all, we are free men, and they are slaves. There are Greek troops, to be sure, in Persian service—but how different is their cause from ours!

"They will be fighting for pay—and not much of at that. We, on the contrary, shall fight for Greece, and our hearts will be in it. As for our foreign troops—Thracians, Paeonians, Illyrians, Agrianes—they are the best and stoutest soldiers in Europe, and they will find as their opponents the slackest and softest of the tribes of Asia. And what, finally, of the two men in supreme command? You have Alexander, they...Darius!"

The next morning, both armies faced off, looking for an opportunity to strike the first blow. Through skillful reconnaissance and positioning, Alexander gained an advantage on his right flank and launched the first successful attack on the Persian lines.

As the two commanders manipulated their armies into the battle, it was Alexander who systematically gained ground and position first, namely on the Persian left. At the same time, however, the Greek mercenaries under Darius' command attacked Alexander's center phalanx with a dangerous ferocity. The tide was turning against the Macedonian center, and the phalanx was in grave danger.

As usual, however, Alexander came to the rescue. His wing had completely driven back the Persian left and thus was free to rush to his center's aid. Alexander and his cavalry and brigades tore into the Greek's flank and relieved the center, which reformed and thereafter held its own against the aggressors. Meanwhile, a veritable avalanche of Persian cavalry poured forth and imperiled Alexander's left flank. Despite being outnumbered and all but crushed, Alexander's Thessalian riders bravely stood their ground, rallying and returning again and again to the charge.

Darius, as was customary with Persian kings, occupied the absolute center position in a gleaming chariot, surrounded by his top officers and family. Having secured his own center and cut a path through the Persian line, Alexander headed straight for Darius and his nobles. Within minutes, the Companions came down upon Darius' royal guard with a godlike fury and slaughtered his men wholesale. When Darius saw that his left flank had collapsed and that his life was in danger, he chose to flee the battle, signaling defeat.

Persian cries of the king's flight crushed morale, and soon the entire army was fleeing for the hills. Vast numbers of Persians were slain by the end of the conflict, stated at over 100,000 including many generals. Darius even abandoned his wife, mother in law, and son. The Macedonian loss was 450 men.

After the victory at Issus, Alexander moved south into Phoenicia to secure its important coastal cities and neutralize all opposition as far as Egypt. He met little resistance as he moved from city to city, offering, as always, amenable terms for surrender.

While in Syria, he received a letter from Darius, in which he asked for his family back and proposed a friendship and alliance. To this letter, Alexander responded by reciting the injuries of Persia to Greece, the beginning of hostilities by Darius, and the instigation of his father's murder by the Persian court. He ended his letter in no uncertain terms:

"I am lord of Asia. Come to me, and you shall receive all that you can ask. But if you deny my right as your lord, stand and fight for your kingdom. I will seek you wherever you are."

Alexander's dauntless drive would next meet a much more formidable foe, however—one that would strain his resourcefulness to its limits.

Tyre remained as the last city of importance to take in Phoenicia, which was not only the chief naval station of the region but of the world. Once it was secured, Alexander could safely continue south into Egypt and Babylon. Tyrian ambassadors met with Alexander and offered submission and their fleet, but with the stipulation that he would not be allowed to enter the city. The Tyrian officials wanted to retain their independence in case Persia won, an unacceptable condition to Alexander. So the city shut its gates and prepared their defenses.

Alexander and his officers agreed that Tyre must be taken. But the question was *how*? The city was situated on an island two miles long, less wide, and separated from the coast by a channel a half-mile wide and some eighteen feet. High, sturdy walls surrounded it, and housed 30,000 men fit for battle, machines to resist a siege, and a number of warships.

The Macedonian generals thought their task impossible, to which Alexander replied, "There is nothing impossible to him who will try." As he had no ships, Alexander made up his mind to build a highway of stone, earth, and wood across the channel, two hundred feet wide.

Laborers were procured from every part of the neighboring country, and the highway progressed rapidly. As they approached the deeper waters, however, they came within missile range of the city, and the Tyrians were waiting. They attacked Alexander's mole day and night from the walls with archers, ballistae, catapults, and other siege weapons, and from the sea with ships loaded with similar weapons. Alexander responded by building fortifications to protect his workers, and two large towers to lead the construction, manned with archers and siege engines of his own to keep the Tyrian ships at a distance.

Under this cover, the work progressed again. The Tyrians mounted a devastating counter-attack, however. They waited for a day when the winds were blowing directly into the highway, and loaded an old ship with a massive store of flammable material and hung cauldrons of combustible substances off the yard-arms and booms. They towed the fire ship to the Macedonians, set it ablaze, and smashed it into the towers, fortifications, and siege engines, engulfing everything in flames.

The strong winds fanned the fires, which proved too violent to be extinguished. The towers and breastworks were lost, and the end of the highway was cracked and weakened, and was being washed away by the waves. The work of months and multitudes had been destroyed in a short hour.

Several of Alexander's officers suggested that they offer a treaty with Tyre, but he was convinced that he couldn't move further into Persia so long as their navy could ferry troops into Tyre and thus gain access to his rear. No, Alexander said, Tyre must fall, and he already had plans to overcome the setback. They would construct a wider highway in a better position; it would support more than two towers, which would shield his workers and soldiers

from the city's defenses. And they would deploy warships of their own.

"Warships?" his officers asked. They had no ships. Not yet, at least.

After work began on the new highway, Alexander mustered a small army and marched to nearby cities that he didn't control. He quickly received their surrender and formed a fleet of 80 ships, which were outfitted with siege engines. When his fleet was ready and highway completed, he set sail for Tyre to launch his attack.

The siege proved tremendously difficult for the Macedonians. Under constant attack from the Tyrian engines, they fought bitterly to secure positions from which they could work to reduce the walls of the city. This effort proved almost impossible, however. Alexander's siege weapons, which were on ground thanks to the highway, and on mounted on ships, could make no impression on the city walls, which were widely renowned as the sturdiest in the world.

After long efforts and trials on every part of the city, the floating engines finally found what they were looking for: a section of wall that was of weaker masonry, as the Tyrians never expected siege engines to be mounted on ships and sailed to their walls.

The Macedonians succeeded in breaching the wall, but the first storming party was driven back by showers of missiles, fire-pots, and other devices. Three days later, however, when the sea was calm, Alexander arrayed his battering engines at the weakened position and ordered his vessels carrying missile-throwing engines and archers to skirmish around the island so as to confuse the garrisons. Once the siege engines crumbled a large section of the wall, bridges were thrown down, and Macedonian infantry poured in.

Alexander led the second wave of soldiers into the city, and although the Tyrians fought bravely, their men were no match for the highly skilled Macedonians. The city was swarmed and taken. Alexander's men wanted vengeance for their brothers who had been captured, tortured, executed on walls in full sight of the invaders, and tossed into the sea to prevent a proper burial. Thousands of Tyrians were slaughtered.

Thus fell Tyre, after a seven-month siege, and Alexander's reputation grew in the lands to that of an invincible god.

While Alexander was besieging Tyre, he received a second letter from Darius in which he offered a fantastic sum for the release of his family, his

daughter's hand in marriage, and all the Persian territory west of the Euphrates. "If I were Alexander, I would accept," Parmenion told the king. "So would I, if I were Parmenion," he replied.

Alexander told Darius that the whole of Persia was his, that he would marry his daughter if he so wished, with or without Darius' consent, and that he had no need for the money. He would keep Darius' family hostage, albeit nobly cared for, to further distress the Great King and to interfere with his ability to defend his kingdom, or so Alexander hoped.

It's interesting to note that a great drive often produces a pride that can, at times, manifest as hubris. Darius wasn't half the man that Alexander was, and the Macedonian took offense at the mere implication that they were peers. No great men or women, no matter how outwardly humble and gracious, are self-deprecating, diffident, weaklings. They possess a rare concentration of intelligence and ability, and they aren't ashamed to make it known, even if only by their actions. This self-confidence is often misinterpreted and denounces as shameless self-love, implying that the only way to be "acceptable" is to assume an air of tottering docility. The genius knows better, though.

September 331 BC soon arrived and saw Alexander marching toward Egypt. He reached the formidable city of Gaza, which refused to submit. Like Tyre, Gaza presented imposing problems for the siege parties, namely the height of the ground on which the city was built. But Alexander would consider no difficulty whatsoever.

He conferred with his engineers and devised a plan to build a massive mound around the city so that the siege engines could be rolled up to the walls and set to work. The scheme worked: Alexander's engines breached the walls within two months. The first three raiding parties were driven back by fierce Gazan warriors. The fourth broke through, however, opening the gates of the city and bringing the destruction of the Gaza garrisons.

Alexander continued through the region, setting up a strong government in Syria and Phoenicia, and headed for the country of the Nile. Egypt had no bond whatsoever with its Persian masters. They were a peaceful folk, and the arrival of a new conqueror mattered little to the population and rulers alike.

The Egyptians, who had lived under the Persian yoke for two centuries, welcomed Alexander and his Macedonians with open arms. Alexander returned to the Egyptians the freedom to exercise their religions and ancient

customs, gave them political autonomy, and arranged for the taxes to flow to his coffers. At the mouth of the Nile, Alexander founded the city of Alexandria-by-Egypt, which would later become a major economic and cultural center in the Mediterranean world. Month by month, Alexander was making good on his promise to use his sword and the swords of his brethren to not just kill, but lift the known world to a new echelon of economic, social, and academic prosperity.

After receiving reinforcements from Europe, Alexander reorganized his forces and started for Babylon. He marched north up the Tigris River, deeper into the bowels of the Persian territory, and founded cities as he went to provide asylum for the wounded. Together, these cities formed a chain of military posts that served to provide communications, and to build up a knowledge of Hellenic culture throughout the country.

A year had passed since Darius' embarrassing defeat at Issus, which he spent amassing an unspeakably large army. Alexander's men had captured Persian scouts, who claimed that Darius' army stood at a million soldiers to Alexander's 41,000. Anxiety gnawed at the Macedonians. No obstacle thus far was insurmountable for Alexander, but a million men?

Alexander learned that Darius had positioned his hordes to intercept his planned crossing of the Tigris, which would spell certain disaster for his army. So the young king changed his point of crossing to well north of Darius, and the army forded the river without opposition. After days of marching, the Macedonians finally encountered the Persians at the plains of Gaugamela. Darius' army was a sight to behold: Infantry as far as the eye could see. Rolling waves of cavalry numbering close to 100,000. Companies of fearsome war elephants.

Alexander and his Companions conducted a careful survey of the enemy and grounds. He was slow to fight, knowing that his only chance to succeed against such odds was strategic and tactical perfection. General Parmenio suggested a surprise night attack, but Alexander rejected it. He wanted to defeat Darius in open battle and leave him with no excuse to use to rally another army.

The armies squared off the following morning. The large, open field had been leveled and cleared of obstacles to allow Darius' masses maximum mobility, which would be used to try to encircle the Macedonians. The Macedonians were heavily out-flanked, but Alexander had anticipated this

and brilliantly arranged on each side of his army a “flying” column of highly maneuverable troops, which could spread out and guard against outflanking movements.

The battle began when a Persian chariot charged into Parmenio’s left flank and center. Alexander countered by leading his Companions into battle on the right.

Parmenio and the men of the left repelled the chariots. By contrast, Alexander made headway into the overwhelming numbers that lay before him. Darius tried to out-flank Alexander on both sides, but the protective columns fanned out and held the edges admirably. Darius tried the maneuver again, this time ordering his center cavalry to try, and edged his center infantry in that direction too. Alexander’s exceptional ability to retain complete battlefield awareness even while engaged in combat himself detected the ploy and, consequently, the gap in the Persian front.

Alexander seized on the opportunity by rapidly forming a deep wedge of infantry, headed it personally with his Companions, and drove it like a battering ram into the Persian center. Darius was positioned just beyond them.

The bravest Persians stood fast and contended the charge, but they were no match for Alexander and his Companions and phalanx, which had never yet found their match. The Macedonians hewed their way through the living masses. Darius watched in horror as Alexander broke his center and angled toward him. Instead of ordering reinforcements to retrieve what might have been a temporary disadvantage, Darius turned and fled.

Despite Darius’ second cowardly retreat, his skilled and able generals knew that the battle could still be won, and pressed on with ferocity. Alexander’s bold move had opened a gap in his own lines, which allowed Persian infantry and cavalry to pour in and envelope his left flank. This put incredible strain on Parmenio’s lines, which were on the brink of being fatally compromised.

Sensing the threat, Alexander wheeled his Companions and galloped to Parmenio’s aid. Simultaneously, vast columns of Persian troops heard that their king had abandoned them yet again. They melted into retreat, completely dissolving the Persian center.

Despite the carnage on the left, which left 60 of Alexander’s elite

Companions dead, demoralization spread quickly amongst the Persian ranks. Macedonian fervor rose in response, galvanizing them to regain their position and drive back the enemy until their ranks collapsed completely. Alexander wasn't done, however—he immediately set out to pursue and capture Darius. His men marched rapidly, covering 70 miles by the next day, but Darius kept well ahead.

Although he would live to see another day, Darius lost between 40,000 – 90,000 men at Gaugamala as well as any hope of retaining his throne. Alexander's losses were just over 1,000 men. Word of the unthinkable victory spread quickly. If a million men couldn't stop Alexander and his claim to Asia, what could?

This sentiment was the final, wheezing breaths of the Persian Empire, which illustrates an important lesson in overcoming incredible odds. No matter the journey, one will always face opposition, whether in the form of competitors, enemies, meddlers, saboteurs, incompetents, and the like. The simplest way to defeat them all is to *accomplish what you set out to accomplish*. Don't let them divert your efforts into undesirable directions. Don't let them convince you that compromises are advantageous or necessary. Be like Alexander in your drive: show them just how dauntless and incorrigible you really are, and just as the sprawling Persian Empire did, with its millions of able-bodied men, they'll lose their will to keep fighting and accept your ascendance.

Alexander's story isn't complete, however. There is more we can learn about drive—including its dangers—from his legendary exploits.

The wondrous wealth of the megalopolis Babylon and the treasure-laden Susa, the next cities to capitulate to Alexander and welcome him as their king, staggered even him. He used the riches to pay his troops handsomely. He also sent a sum home to Antipater six-times the annual income of Athens to put down a Spartan rebellion.

Alexander named Mazaeus, a Persian general who had fought bravely in Gaugamala, viceroy of Babylon, and appointed several other ranking Persians who had surrendered to other positions of political power. The military control, however, would remain with Macedonian soldiers. This was another stroke of Alexander's genius, as it fostered allegiance and respect among the conquered, and reinforced his standing offer to the remaining peoples that lie ahead: accept me and live well, or oppose me and perish. "I have not come to

Asia to destroy nations,” he explained to the defectors. “I have come here that those who are subdued by my arms shall have naught to complain of my victories.”

The rugged Macedonians enjoyed a long rest and the many luxuries of Babylon before preparing for their final journey to take Persepolis, the primary capital of Persia, and thus the entire kingdom. To get there, however, would require the traversal of several rivers and a mountain range comparable to the Alps in size and altitude, which was occupied by hostile, hardy tribes. And it was the winter. Nevertheless, the Macedonian legions set out into the labyrinth of rocks, precipices, torrents, valleys, and passes at the end of 331 BC.

The Uxian mountaineers maintained a fortress deep in the mountains and controlled the lands. If Alexander was to pass, they said, he would have to pay them tribute just as the Persians did. Alexander laughed at their demands and found another road, albeit a very difficult one, onto the mountain. He soon located the Uxian villages and quickly swept over them. The Uxians were dumbfounded at the speed with which Alexander navigated the rugged terrain, and mounted a last stand at their stronghold. Despite a staunch defense, Alexander led a siege that only lasted a few hours before the Uxians offered surrender, which Alexander accepted.

Onward Alexander went, moving ever-closer to the treacherous mountain pass known as the Persian Gates. The Gates marked one of two routes that lead to Persepolis, through the lands controlled by the satrap Ariobarzanes, who remained loyal to the Persian cause. While Alexander could have avoided the pass by taking the safer road to Persepolis, he decided not to—quite literally choosing the road less traveled. He did so for a good reason, though: to prevent Ariobarzanes and his force of 40,000 men from having a clear view of his rear as well as a direct path to Susa, Babylon, and other freshly conquered lands.

Thus, Alexander split his army, sending Parmenio with the baggage and siege train along the secure road through the foothills to the south, and leading himself the Companion cavalry, the lancers and horse-bowmen, and the archers to the dangerous canyon. He arrived at the Gates to find it walled off. Alexander prepared a direct assault, as was his custom. Once the offensive began, however, he was dismayed to learn that he had led his men into a devastating ambush.

Ariobarzanes had anticipated the Macedonians and allowed them to march deep into the pass with no resistance whatsoever. When the head of their column reached the narrowest section, the Persians unleashed a terrifying attack from above, raining down arrows, stones, and boulders. Whole files of Macedonians were crushed, but they pressed on. They tried to scale the granite walls of the pass, helping each other up and defending each other with their shields. But the onslaught continued to decimate the Macedonian ranks, forcing Alexander to withdraw his forces from the seemingly unassailable defense. He had to find another way to the Persians.

As if sent by the gods themselves, a shepherd came forth who had been sold into Persian slavery and who knew the region intimately. He showed Alexander several unknown, difficult paths through the foothills that would take him to Ariobarzanes' rear. Alexander promised the shepherd incredible wealth if he led his army honestly, and a quick death if he betrayed them.

The plan was simple: Alexander would take a large contingent of his best soldiers with the shepherd while Craterus, his commander of the phalanx, would keep the rest of the men looking busy in front of the wall so as to maintain pretenses of another frontal assault. When Alexander was in position to strike from the rear, he would sound trumpets, and Craterus would lead a charge in the front.

The shepherd, Alexander, and his men set out that night, into a violent storm. They had 12 miles to cover and time was of the essence. If Ariobarzanes suspected the maneuver and caught Alexander in the wilds with a force of his own, Alexander's saga would likely come to a bloody end. But Alexander took such calculated risks with carefree ease, as if the sheer force of his intention would bend the universe to his favor. A reflection of his accomplishments makes one wonder if such is possible.

The group marched through the night in hushed silence and, by the morning, reached a path that led directly to the Persian camp. Alexander waited through the day until the following night, and then split up his men. A detachment would head to the nearby Araxes River and build a bridge over it to occupy the only escape route available to the Persians. The second detachment, led by Alexander, would descend directly into the Persian camp.

Alexander's vanguard soon came upon their enemy's outposts and, through surprise attacks, eliminated each, allowing him and his men to reach the edge of the camp unperceived. Meanwhile, Craterus had done well

maintaining his pretense with numerous campfires representative of Alexander's full army. When Alexander's trumpets blared, the entire camp froze. Mayhem immediately followed when thousands of Macedonians poured in from all sides. Craterus and his brigades simultaneously charged the wall, scaled it, and overran the dumbfounded garrisons.

The ambush was a resounding success. The enemy was cut to pieces. Ariobarzanes and his bodyguard tried to escape through the rear, only to meet the Macedonians that had bridged the river. The Persians chose to die with their swords in hand. Afterward, Alexander gathered his Companions and set out to Persepolis at once, traveling over 40 miles in one night, through the snow, and reached the magnificent capital before word had even arrived of what happened in the mountains. The city opened its gates and welcomed its new king.

Great feasts were held in Persepolis, and against his usual habit of preserving whatever he conquered, Alexander gave in to his men's demands of retaliation. Athens had been burned and desecrated by the Persian king in times past, and the Macedonians wanted to inflict the same wounds upon Persepolis. Thus, the great city was given up to plunder and the magnificent palace of the Persian kings was burned to the ground after a drunken celebration. Women and their jewels were to be left untouched, however, as ordered by Alexander.

Alexander lavished his men as usual, who spent their days and nights in revelry. He was never one to rest for long, though. Within a month of taking Persepolis, he made various excursions to neighboring tribes to complete the Hellenic subjugation once and for all. This included a clan of fierce mountaineers not unlike the Uxians who controlled roads from Persis to the sea, which Alexander intended to use. To reach the tribe, icy rain had to be endured and snow-clad hills traversed; steps had to be cut into frozen slopes; and roads had to be hewn through the woods. Every difficulty was overcome with the king leading the way. The mountain people were reached and agreements were struck, thus accomplishing Alexander's great vision. In a mere four years, the Macedonians had vanquished the mighty Persian army and claimed its lavish empire, reversing the conquest accomplished by King Xerxes over a century before.

By 324 BC, 11 years after his ascension to the Macedonian throne, Alexander had led his army 22,000 miles, was undefeated in battle, and

founded some 70 cities in the lands he conquered, 22 of which he named after himself. These epic achievements pay homage to his simple philosophy on life. “I would rather live a short life of glory than a long one of obscurity,” he wrote. Thanks to his unparalleled ambition, drive, and willpower, few figures in the pages of history embody a spirit of *carpe diem*—seize the day—like Alexander did.

In June of 323 BC, at age 32, Alexander contracted a mysterious fever. Within a week, he was dead. Whispers of conspiracy and murder filled the air, but nothing definitive was brought to light.

Alexander had written a lengthy will in case of his death, which called for his successors to conduct military expansion into the southern and western Mediterranean, build monumental constructions, and further unify Eastern and Western populations. After he was gone, his generals dismissed the plans as impractical and extravagant. Instead, they carved up the conquered territories for themselves and went to war with each other and the rest of Greece. This feud lasted 40 years and culminated in the blood-soaked collapse of the entire kingdom of Macedonia.

Alexander’s legendary apotheosis is a testament to the transformational power of drive, and of the will to physically, mentally, and spiritually push oneself beyond the impossible. Although his method was war, and some choose to remember him as a ruthless savage, there’s no denying that his compassion for the vanquished and diplomacy represented something much greater in him, and that his legacy was far more profound than meaningless carnage.

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Geniuses don’t work long and hard from a begrudging sense of duty—they do it because they have a strong desire to give everything they’ve got to a project and see it through to the best of their abilities. Ambition shows you the path to success, but drive is what gets you through it.

“I do not think there is any other quality so essential to success of any kind as the quality of perseverance,” wrote John D. Rockefeller. “It overcomes almost everything, even nature.”

Many people now recognized for their stellar achievements were once listless and purposeless. Stephen Hawking was once a young college student who felt “bored with life” without “anything worth doing.” When he was

diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis at age 21, the doctors gave him two-and-a-half years to live. While many people would have sunk into a depression and accepted that death was on the horizon, Hawking decided that there were still many things he wanted to do in his life. Stephen turned 70 this year, baffling scientists with his extraordinary longevity, and he has become one of the most celebrated scientists of our times.

Alexander's drive was nothing short of godlike. "Sex and sleep alone make me conscious that I am mortal," he said. When he landed on the shores of Asia Minor, he looked at the vast expanses ahead of him—the invincible cities, the millions of Persian soldiers—and simply saw heaps of mud and stone to take and hordes of men that will soon call him king.

Our journeys to greatness will probably never require the sheer power of will that Alexander's did. I don't know if there's any modern experience quite comparable to charging headlong into a few hundred thousand roaring soldiers. But if we could capture just a fraction of Alexander's spirit and worldview, we would be unstoppable in our adventures.

"A passionate desire and an unwearied will can perform impossibilities or what may seem to be such to the cold, timid, and feeble," wrote the famous English doctor Sir James Simpson.

So what lies behind drive? How do geniuses find the energy and confidence to believe in their goals and their abilities, as well as the audacity to continue so believing until their wills are reality?

The Power of Purpose

Purpose is the primary fuel of ambition. Purpose creates a destination. We can only become fully engaged in life when we feel that we are doing something that really matters. Purpose is what inspires us, lights us up, and floats our boats.

Washington Irving—the famous author, historian and essayist—said, "Great minds have purposes, others have wishes. Little minds are tamed and subdued by misfortune, but great minds rise above it."

The search for purpose and meaning is one of the most powerful and lasting themes in every culture since the dawn of time. You'll find it in Homer's *Odyssey*, and it has inspired some of the greatest spiritual figures in history: Jesus, Buddha, Moses, Mohammad. You'll even find it in modern

culture in movies like *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, which re-tells the story of Perceval's search for the Holy Grail through the daring character of Indiana Jones, as well as the famous Star Wars trilogy, in which Luke Skywalker confronts his deepest fears by confronting and vanquishing Darth Vader and the Empire. It's no coincidence that these movies—which modernize the legendary virtues of the hero's journey, the search for meaning and the triumph of good over evil—are among the most popular and successful of all time.

“There is one quality we must possess to win,” said Napoleon Hill, author of one of the best-selling books of all time, *Think and Grow Rich*, “and that is definiteness of purpose, the knowledge of what one wants, and a burning desire to possess it.”

For a time, Alexander was an almost inhuman force, alive with unbridled and unmatched purpose. While many in his position would've been content with a life of kingly hedonism, Alexander was cut from a different cloth. He pawned off everything he owned to finance what he truly cared about: his vision of a glorious destiny and immortality. But perhaps more impressively, he conducted himself with extreme equilibrium, sanity, and benevolence startlingly uncharacteristic of a conqueror. He lived in a time where men of his ilk were expected to indulge in mindless slaughter and degradation of the people they subdued, but he not only discouraged it, he forbade it.

One year before his death, however, his quest required an advance from Persia to India to conquer what was left of the known world. When Alexander announced this to his soldiers, they mutinied. They were exhausted and longed to return to their families. Despite inspired, moving speeches, Alexander couldn't convince them to continue, so he released them from duty and relegated himself to the role of administrator of his empire—a post he loathed. Months later, Plutarch wrote that the king “lost his spirits, and grew diffident of the protection and assistance of the gods, and suspicious of his friends.”

Ironically, during this time of ennui, Alexander suffered his worst losses. Intrigues led to the execution of his great friends and loyal generals Philotas and Parmenio. He killed his brave and loyal officer, Cleitus, over drunken slurs. Alexander sank into a deep depression, almost driving him to suicide, and sowed much discontent amongst his people that had come to love him dearly.

Alexander's plight didn't stop there. His best friend and general Hephaestion died a mysterious death, rumored to be from poisoning. The loss sent Alexander into an irrevocable rage that cost thousands of Persians their lives and led to his further self-deification as well as his increased adoption of Persian customs, which many Greeks despised.

Finally, Alexander—a man who had defied death so regularly and against such odds that his enemies had declared him invincible—lost his life to an unexplainable fever that began after a night of heavy drinking. The morality of Alexander's ambitious purpose notwithstanding, it's very clear that once he had lost it, he rapidly lost everything. If we are to succeed in our endeavors toward greatness, we must learn and apply this final lesson of Alexander's to our journeys. Simply put: If purpose dies, the entire adventure quickly follows suit.

But what is a purpose, exactly? The dictionary defines it as follows:

The reason why something is done or why something exists. It is something set up as an object or an end to be attained; an intention.

Where the goal is the *what*, the purpose is the all-important *why*. Purpose gives goals meaning. When the intention to make something happen is weak—when you're just not feeling the "fire"—it's not going to happen. People that ignore purpose don't go very far in life. Nobody can love what they don't feel in their hearts. The will to go on expires, soon or later.

How excited are you to get to work in the morning? How much do you enjoy what you do for its own sake rather than what it gets you? And how accountable do you hold yourself to a deeply held set of goals?

These are the questions of purpose all adventurous souls must ask themselves. If your answers to these questions are enthusiastic, then chances are you're bringing a strong sense of purpose to your pursuits. If your answers to these questions are anything less, chances are you're just going through the motions. The former path breeds persistence and grit, which lead to opportunities and successes thereafter. The latter breeds indifference and lethargy, which can't handle even the pettiest of pressures.

Imagine that you're out at sea on a boat, voyaging to a far-off destination. Your boat springs a leak, which immediately becomes your priority. You jump down and start bailing water to prevent going under, but forget that nobody is left to navigate the ship. One day, after doing nothing but bailing

water for who knows how long, you poke your head over the bow and wonder where the heck you are and how you got there. This is the purposeless life. People can become so preoccupied with just staying afloat that they fail to realize that nobody is at the helm.

Unfortunately, clarifying purpose takes time—quiet, uninterrupted time—which is something many of us feel we don’t have. We rush from one obligation to another without a “50,000 foot” view of where we’re going. It may seem self-indulgent to stop and reflect on questions of meaning and purpose, but your journey will demand it.

When Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg, and David Geffen started DreamWorks, their purpose was to entertain and delight people. Profits were second to that. They went through some tough times, coming close to bankruptcy twice. But they persevered in large part due to their dedication to the studio’s vision and reason for being. Today, DreamWorks is one of the largest film studios in the world.

Nobody can force a purpose on you—you must choose it of your own free will. There are so many ways to help people in the world, but you need to find your way—the way that makes you want to put this book down right now and get into action. As Howard Thurman said, you must find what makes you come alive.

So, before beginning any adventure—before choosing any particular path—don’t forget to ask yourself *why*: Why are you doing this? Why is it exciting? Why does it really matter? When you’ve addressed these questions with true convictions, you know you’ve unlocked your purpose. This is the wellspring of any strong drive to succeed.

There’s more to this story, though. By awakening purpose, you’ve created an ember, not a fire. You’ve begun something, but must quickly pile on the kindling to complete the transformation that all geniuses undergo. You’re ready to fight the first battle in your journey to greatness, the battle between the Work and the Resistance.

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Some people will do anything to avoid the work. They have pretty spreadsheets, fancy proposals, slick PowerPoint presentations, and sparkling visions of champagne baths and keynote speeches.

They'll rattle off a long list of industry bloggers that love their ideas, the interviews they have lined up to woo top talent, and the play-by-play of their ten-year plans and distribution models. But ask them about the *real* work—the hard work that's required to materialize ideas into something usable, valuable, and viable—and they're likely to fall into an awkward silence.

These self-styled visionaries just don't get it. Or they don't want to get it. They aren't doing the work, and they won't succeed regardless of how busy they keep themselves with not doing it. So what is the work, anyway?

The work consists of the actions that directly create something with tangible, exchangeable, enduring value. Once that's complete, the work includes the actions that move the creation out into the hands of users and consumers, in exchange for something of equal value. The drive of a genius is always in the direction of *doing the work*.

If you have a brilliant idea that will change the way some part of the world works, tweeting and blogging about it isn't the work. Coding a proof of concept that you can use to raise funding with is, however. If you have a story stirring inside you that the world needs to read, spending another 50 hours searching for inspiration or bouncing your ideas off others isn't the work. Finishing the outline and starting the first draft is.

Alexander was renowned for his unequalled dedication to the work. Once he locked his sights on the next milestone in his journey, whether it be the next city to subdue or next region to assimilate, he spent every waking minute in action, making it so. In his own words, the most slavish thing was to "luxuriate," whereas the most royal thing was to "labor."

He also understood the power of *momentum*. Once you're in motion, it's much easier to stay so, which allows for greater and greater acceleration. And the closer Alexander approached the accomplishment of a goal, the harder he pushed. Look at his actions after his brilliant, but harrowing, breakthrough at the Persian Gates. He hadn't slept in over a day and just completed another perilous assault, and his officers suggested that he join his men in celebration of what was sure to be the last of the Persian defenses. After a well-deserved rest, Persepolis would be theirs. Instead, Alexander did what just came natural to him. A man of such impetuous drive couldn't stop when the finish line was just over the horizon.

If doing the work is the key to victory in our journeys to greatness, what has the power to stop us? The answer takes us inward, and if we are to

advance in our quests, it must be conquered with the same vigor and determination of Alexander.

The Invisible, Insidious, and Impersonal Enemy That Hates the Work

Resistance is invisible, insidious, and impersonal. It can't be seen, but it's in you right now, and it can be felt. Resistance tells you anything to keep you from doing the work. It will lie, argue, bluster, seduce, and bully you to get its way. It will say anything to strike a deal and then stab you in the back. It doesn't care who you are or what you want to do. It has no conscience. While the genius code awakens our potentials, Resistance obscures them.

What kinds of things does Resistance hate most?

Any creative artistic action. Any type of entrepreneurial venture. Any new diet or fitness regimen. Any method of spiritual advancement. Any type of education. Anything courageous. In short, anything that requires us to forego immediate gratification in search of long-term growth or fulfillment.

Resistance loves excuses, justifications, and compromises. Start tomorrow, it says. Wait until you're a bit smarter, stronger, wealthier, happier, motivated, or prepared. Don't rock the boat, it advises. Who are you to challenge the status quo? Do you really think you can bear the cross that comes with it? Resistance's stock in trade is diversions, follies, and dead ends, and it's a *remarkable* salesperson.

In his last year, Alexander lost the only work that mattered to him—the heroic pursuit of glory for himself and for Greece—and with it, the only defense against Resistance. This malevolent force relished the chance to conquer the man that conquered the world, and proved more than capable of the task. If it can undermine someone of Alexander's strength, it can do at least the same to us.

Resistance has a fatal weakness, though. We can turn the tables on it. It can be defeated.

In his brilliant book, *The War of Art*, Stephen Pressfield reveals that Resistance's Achilles heel lies in the fact that it will only fight that which is truly important in your life. It wants to kill your deepest purposes and desires, your true calling and gifts. Yes, *kill* them. In this way, however, it shows you what work you must do—your very personal path to profound fulfillment, happiness, and success. Resistance dares you to meet it in pitched battle.

When you do anything but the work, Resistance sneers at you. It's playing you like a marionette. You're feeding it, making it stronger. But when you do the work, it shrieks in horror. "Anything but the work!" it cries. It invades your mind and flashes shiny distractions. Facebook! Twitter! Television! Phone! ANYTHING BUT THE WORK!

Make no mistake. The fight against Resistance is a war to the death. It will tell you you're too weak to kill it. Too stupid. Too lazy. But you're not. Ironically, it depends on your obedience for its strength.

Defiantly do the work instead and Resistance withers. Every bit of work done strikes at it. Do enough work and its armor crumbles, its power fades, and all that's left is a whispering ghost. Do more work and it even stops whispering.

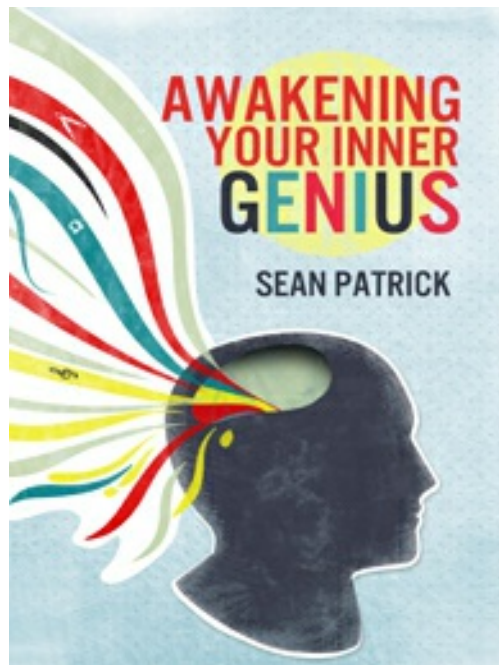
If you're trying to create a business, a career, a relationship, or anything else in your life, you're a warrior.

Your primary enemy is Resistance, and as we saw in Alexander's story, it's ultimately more dangerous—and powerful—than barbarian hordes, impenetrable castles, and sweeping empires.

The journey to greatness requires that you fight the battle against Resistance anew every day by doing the work. Drive compels you forward. If we are to learn from Alexander's brilliance, you strengthen your will by clarifying purpose, getting into motion, and never relenting. And if we are to learn from Alexander's greatest mistake, you retain your strength by never accepting anything less than the adventure you yearn for—your call to greatness.

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If you'd like to know what some of history's greatest thinkers and achievers can teach you about awakening your inner genius, and how to find, follow, and fulfill your journey to greatness, then you want to read *Awakening Your Inner Genius* today.



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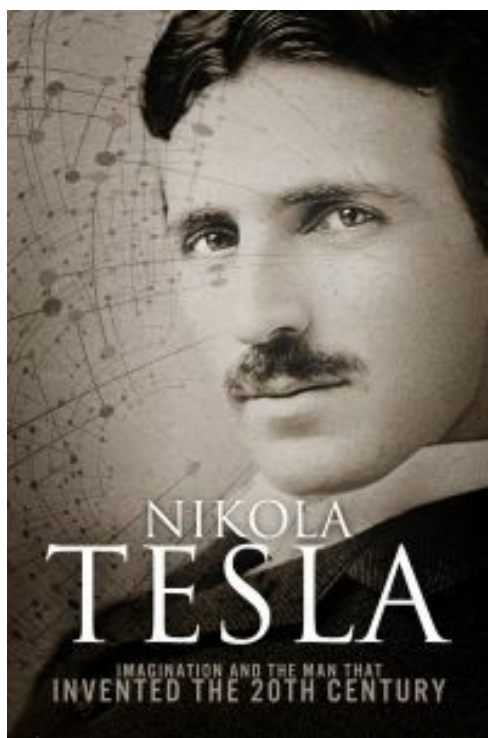
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This simply isn't true.

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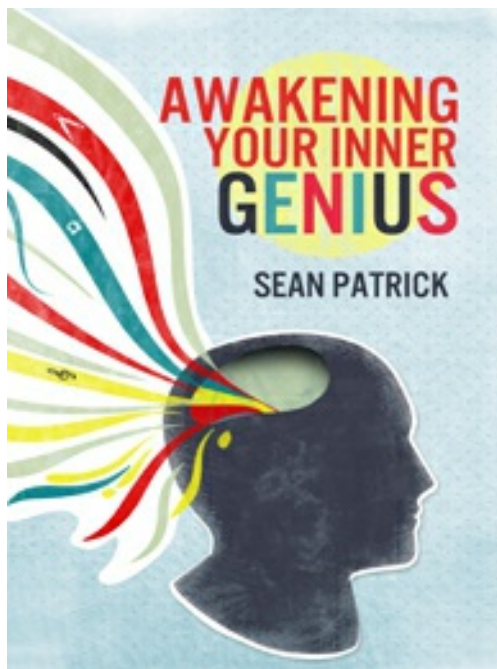
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Thanks again, I hope to hear from you, and I wish you the best!

Sean

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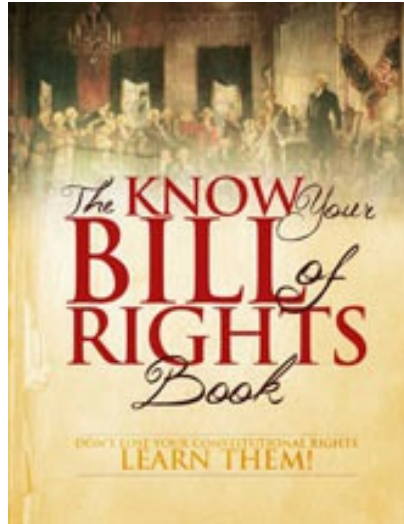


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